

New Hampshire Volunteer River Assessment Program 2005 Israel River Water Quality Report



Photo: Israel River (14-ISR), Route 116 Bridge

Prepared by:

State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services
Water Division
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**New Hampshire Volunteer River Assessment Program
2005 Israel River Water Quality Report**

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The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) -Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) extends sincere thanks to the volunteers of the Israel River Advisory Group for their efforts during 2005. This report was created solely from the data collected by the volunteers listed below. Their time and dedication is an expression of their genuine concern for local water resources and has significantly contributed to our knowledge of river and stream water quality in New Hampshire.

2005 Israel River Volunteers

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Report

Each year the VRAP prepares and distributes a water quality report for each volunteer group that is based solely on the water quality data collected by that volunteer group during a specific year. The reports summarize and interpret the data, particularly as they relate to New Hampshire surface water quality standards, and serve as a teaching tool and guidance document for future monitoring activities by the individual volunteer groups.

1.2. Report Format

Each report includes the following:

❖ **Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) Overview**

This section includes a discussion of the history of VRAP, the technical support, training and guidance provided by NHDES, and how data is transmitted to the volunteers and used in surface water quality assessments.

❖ **Monitoring Program Description**

This section provides a description of the volunteer group's monitoring program including monitoring objectives as well as a table and map showing sample station locations.

❖ **Results and Discussion**

Water quality data collected during the year are summarized on a parameter-by-parameter basis using (1) a summary table that includes the number of samples collected, data ranges, the number of samples meeting New Hampshire water quality standards, and the number of samples adequate for water quality assessments at each station, (2) a discussion of the data, (3) a list of applicable recommendations, and (4) a river graph showing the range of measured values at each station. Sample results reported as less than the detection limit were assumed equal to one-half the detection limit on the river graphs. This approach simplifies the understanding of the parameter of interest, and specifically helps one to visualize how the river or watershed is functioning from upstream to downstream. In addition, this format allows the reader to better understand potential pollution areas and target those areas for additional sampling or environmental enhancements. Where applicable, the river graph also shows New Hampshire surface water quality standards or levels of concern for comparison purposes.

❖ **Appendix A – Data**

This appendix includes a spreadsheet showing the data results and additional information, such data results which do not meet New Hampshire surface water quality standards, and data that is unusable for assessment purposes due to quality control requirements.

❖ **Appendix B – Interpreting VRAP Water Quality Parameters**

This appendix includes a brief description of water quality parameters typically sampled by VRAP volunteers and their importance, as well as applicable state water quality criteria or levels of concern.

❖ **Appendix C – Glossary of River Ecology Terms**

This appendix contains a list of terms commonly used when discussing river ecology and water quality.

2. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2.1. Past, Present, and Future

In 1998, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) initiated the New Hampshire Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) as a means of expanding public education of water resources in New Hampshire. VRAP promotes awareness and education of the importance of maintaining water quality in rivers and streams. VRAP was created in the wake of the success of the existing New Hampshire Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP), which provides educational and stewardship opportunities pertaining to lakes and ponds to New Hampshire's residents.

Today, VRAP continues to serve the public by providing water quality monitoring equipment, technical support, and educational programs. In 2005, VRAP supported twenty-eight volunteer groups on numerous rivers and watersheds throughout the state. These volunteer groups conduct water quality monitoring on an ongoing basis. The work of the VRAP volunteers increases the amount of river water quality information available to local, state and federal governments, which allows for effective financial resource allocation and watershed planning.

2.2. Technical Support

VRAP lends and maintains water quality monitoring kits for volunteer groups throughout the state. The kits contain electronic meters and supplies for "in-the-field" measurements of water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, specific conductance (conductivity), and turbidity. These are the core parameters typically measured by volunteers. However, other water quality parameters such as nutrients, metals, and *E. coli* can also be studied by volunteer groups, although VRAP does not always provide funds to cover laboratory analysis costs. Thus, VRAP encourages volunteer groups to pursue other fundraising activities such as association membership fees, special events, in-kind services (non-monetary contributions from individuals and organizations), and grant writing.

VRAP typically recommends sampling every other week during the summer, and volunteer groups are encouraged to organize a long-term sampling program in order to begin to determine trends in river conditions. Each year volunteers design and arrange a sampling schedule in cooperation with NHDES staff. Project designs are created through a review and discussion of existing water quality information, such as known and perceived problem areas or locations of exceptional water quality. The interests, priorities, and resources of the partnership determine monitoring locations, parameters, and frequency.

Water quality measurements repeated over time create a picture of the fluctuating conditions in rivers and streams and help to determine where improvements, restoration or preservation may benefit the river and the communities it supports. Water quality results are also used to determine if a

river is meeting surface water quality standards. Volunteer monitoring results, meeting DES Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC) requirements, supplement the efforts of DES to assess the condition of New Hampshire surface waters. The New Hampshire Surface Water Quality Regulations are available through the DES Public Information Center at www.des.state.nh.us/wmb/Env-Ws1700.pdf or (603) 271-1975.

2.3. Training and Guidance

Each VRAP volunteer attends an annual training session to receive a demonstration of monitoring protocols and sampling techniques. Training sessions are an opportunity for volunteers to receive an updated version of monitoring techniques. During the training, volunteers have an opportunity for hand-on use of the VRAP equipment and may also receive instruction in the collection of samples for laboratory analysis. Training is accomplished in approximately two hours, after which volunteers are certified in the care, calibration, and use of the VRAP equipment. In some cases, veteran group coordinators can attend a “train the trainer” session. In these trainings the group coordinator receives an update in sampling protocols and techniques and will then train the individual volunteers of their respective group.

VRAP groups conduct sampling according to a prearranged monitoring schedule and VRAP protocols. NHDES staff from the VRAP program aim to visit each group annually during a scheduled sampling events to verify that volunteers successfully follow the VRAP protocols. If necessary, volunteers are re-trained during the visit, and the group’s monitoring coordinator is notified of the result of the verification visit. VRAP groups forward water quality results to NHDES for incorporation into an annual report and state water quality assessment activities.

2.4. Data Usage

2.4.1. Annual Water Quality Reports

All data collected by volunteers are summarized in water quality reports that are prepared and distributed after the conclusion of the sampling period (typically fall or winter). Each volunteer group receives copies of the report. The volunteers can use the reports and data as a means of understanding the details of water quality, guiding future sampling efforts, or determining restoration activities.

2.4.2. New Hampshire Surface Water Quality Assessments

Along with data collected from other water quality programs, specifically the State Ambient River Monitoring Program, applicable volunteer data are used to support periodic DES surface water quality assessments. VRAP data are entered into NHDES’s Environmental Monitoring Database and are ultimately uploaded to the Environmental Protection Agency’s database, STORET.

Assessment results and the methodology used to assess surface waters are published by DES every two years (i.e., Section 305(b) Water Quality Reports) as required by the federal Clean Water Act. The reader is encouraged to log on to the DES web page to review the assessment methodology and list of impaired waters <http://www.des.state.nh.us/wmb/swqa/>.

2.5. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

In order for VRAP data to be used in the assessment of New Hampshire's surface waters, the data must meet quality control guidelines as outlined in the VRAP Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). The VRAP QAPP was approved by NHDES and reviewed by EPA in the summer of 2003. The QAPP is reviewed annually and is officially updated and approved every five years. The VRAP Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) measures include a six-step approach to ensuring the accuracy of the equipment and consistency in sampling efforts.

- ❖ **Calibration:** Prior to each measurement, the pH and dissolved oxygen meters are calibrated. Conductivity and turbidity meters are calibrated and/or checked against a known standard before the first measurement and after the last one.
- ❖ **Replicate Analysis:** A second measurement by each meter is taken from the original sample at one of the stations during the sampling day. The replicate analysis should not be conducted at the same station over and over again, but should be conducted at different stations throughout the monitoring season.
- ❖ **6.0 pH Standard:** A reading of the pH 6.0 buffer is recorded at one of the stations during the sampling day. If the same sampling schedule is used throughout the monitoring season, the 6.0 pH standard check should be conducted at different stations.
- ❖ **Zero Oxygen Standard:** A reading of a zero oxygen solution is recorded at one of the stations during the sampling day. If the same sampling schedule is used throughout the monitoring season, the zero oxygen standard check should be conducted at different stations.
- ❖ **DI Turbidity Blank:** A reading of the DI blank is recorded at one of the stations during the sampling day. If the same sampling schedule is used throughout the monitoring season, the blank check should be conducted at different stations.
- ❖ **Post-Calibration:** At the conclusion of each sampling day, all meters are calibrated.

2.5.1. Measurement Performance Criteria

Precision is calculated for field and laboratory measurements through measurement replicates (instrumental variability) and is calculated for each sampling day. The use of VRAP data for assessment purposes is contingent on compliance with a parameter-specific relative percent difference (RPD) as derived from equation 1, below. Any data exceeding the limits of the individual measures are disqualified from surface water quality assessments. All data that exceeds the limits defined by the VRAP QAPP are acknowledged in the data tables with an explanation of why the data was unusable. Table 1 shows typical parameters studied under VRAP and the associated quality control procedures.

(Equation 1)

$$RPD = \frac{|x_1 - x_2|}{\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2}} \times 100 \%$$

where x_1 is the original sample and x_2 is the replicate sample

Table 1. Field Analytical Quality Controls

Water Quality Parameter	QC Check	QC Acceptance Limit	Corrective Action	Person Responsible for Corrective Action	Data Quality Indicator
Temperature	Measurement replicate	± 0.2 °C	Repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Precision
Dissolved Oxygen	Measurement replicate	± 2% of saturation, or ± 0.2 mg/L	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Precision
	Known buffer (zero O ₂ solution)	<0.5 mg/L	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Relative accuracy
pH	Measurement replicate	± 0.1 std units	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Precision
	Known buffer (pH = 6.0)	± 0.1 standard units	Recalibrate instrument repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Accuracy
Specific Conductance	Measurement replicate	± 30 µS/cm	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Precision
	Method blank (Zero air reading)	± 5.0 µS/cm	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Accuracy
Turbidity	Measurement replicate	± 0.1 NTU	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Precision
	Method blank (DI Water)	± 0.1 NTU	Recalibrate instrument, repeat measurement	Volunteer Monitors	Accuracy

3. METHODS

During the summer of 2005, volunteers from the Israel River Advisory Group began water quality monitoring on the mainstem of the Israel River. The goal of this effort was to provide water quality data from the Israel River relative to surface water quality standards and to allow for the assessment of the river for support of aquatic life. The establishment of a long-term monitoring program will allow for an understanding of the river's dynamics, or variations on a station-by-station and year-to-year basis. The data can also serve as a baseline from which to determine any water pollution problems in the river and/or watershed. The Volunteer River Assessment Program has provided field training, equipment, and technical assistance.

During 2005, trained volunteers from the Israel River Advisory Group monitored water quality at eight sites along the mainstem of the Israel River (Figure 1, Table 2). Stations ID's are designated using a three letter code to identify the waterbody name plus a number indicating the relative position of the station. The higher the station number the more upstream the station is in the watershed. The entire Israel River Watershed is designated as Class B waters.

Water quality monitoring was conducted monthly from July to October. In-situ measurements of water temperature, air temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity and specific conductance were taken using handheld meters provided by NHDES. Table 3 summarizes the parameters measured, laboratory standard methods, and equipment used.

Table 2. Sampling stations for the Israel River, NHDES VRAP, 2005

Station ID	Location	Town	Elevation*(Ft.)
20-ISR	Valley Road Bridge	Randolph	1400
19-ISR	Carters Cut Bridge	Jefferson	1300
17-ISR	Bridge at Larcomb Road	Jefferson	1100
16-ISR	Route 115A Bridge	Jefferson	1100
14-ISR	Route 116 Bridge	Jefferson	1000
10-ISR	Route 2 Bridge	Jefferson	1000
08-ISR	Snowmobile Trail Bridge	Lancaster	900
02-ISR	Route 2/Route 3 Bridge	Lancaster	900

*Elevations have been rounded off to 100-foot increments for calibration of dissolved oxygen meter

Figure 1. Israel River Watershed and Monitoring Stations 2005

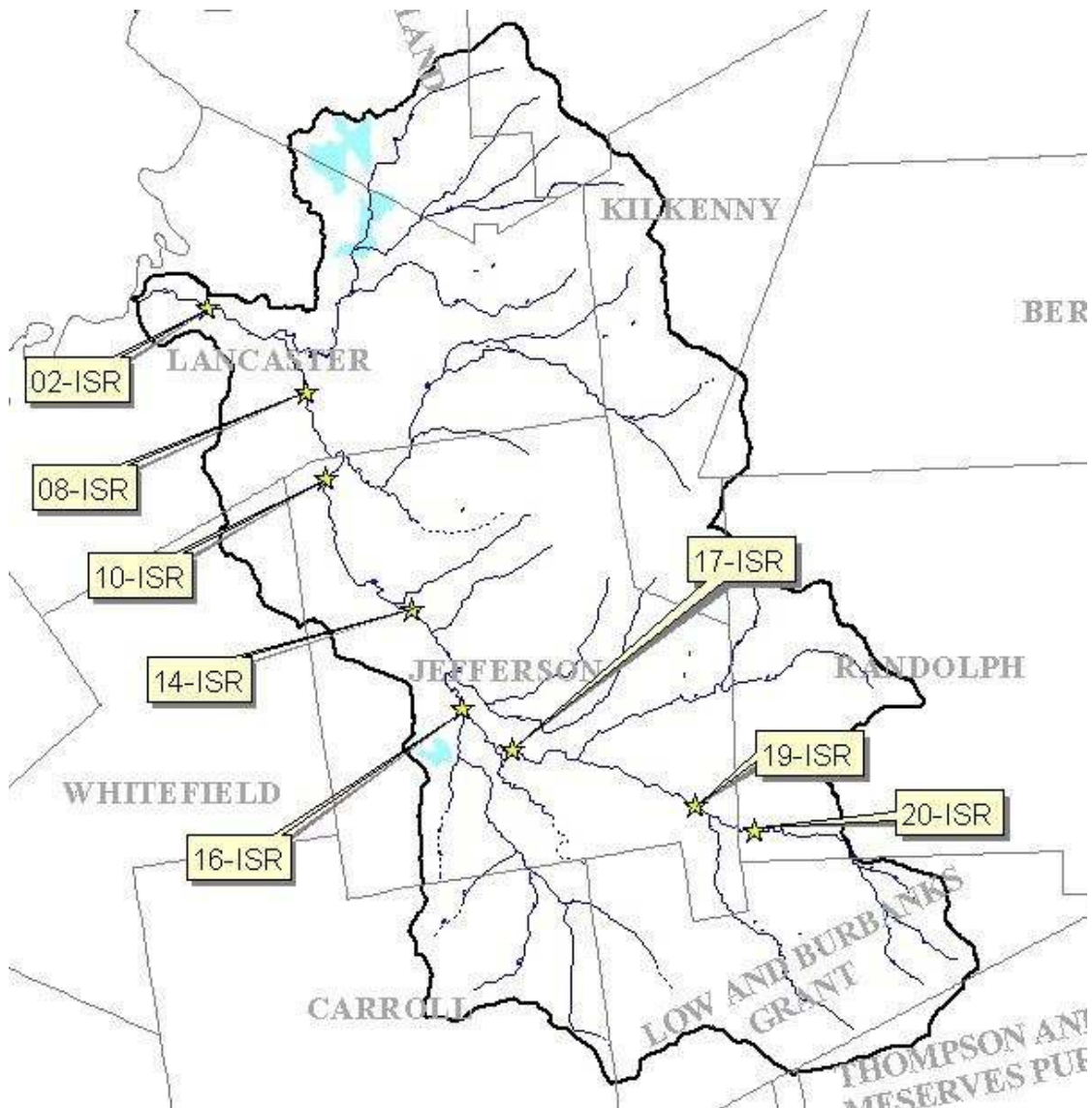


Table 3. Sampling and Analysis Methods

Parameter	Sample Type	Standard Method	Equipment Used	Laboratory
Temperature	In-Situ	SM 2550	YSI 95	-----
Dissolved Oxygen	In-Situ	SM 4500 O G	YSI 95	-----
pH	In-Situ	SM 4500 H+	Orion 210A+	-----
Turbidity	In-Situ	EPA 180.1	Lamotte 2020	-----
Specific Conductance	In-Situ	SM 2510	YSI 30	-----

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Dissolved Oxygen

Four measurements were taken in the field for dissolved oxygen concentration at eight stations on the mainstem of the Israel River from Randolph to Lancaster. (Table 4). Of the 32 measurements taken, all met quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) requirements and are usable for New Hampshire's 2006 surface water quality report to the Environmental Protection Agency.

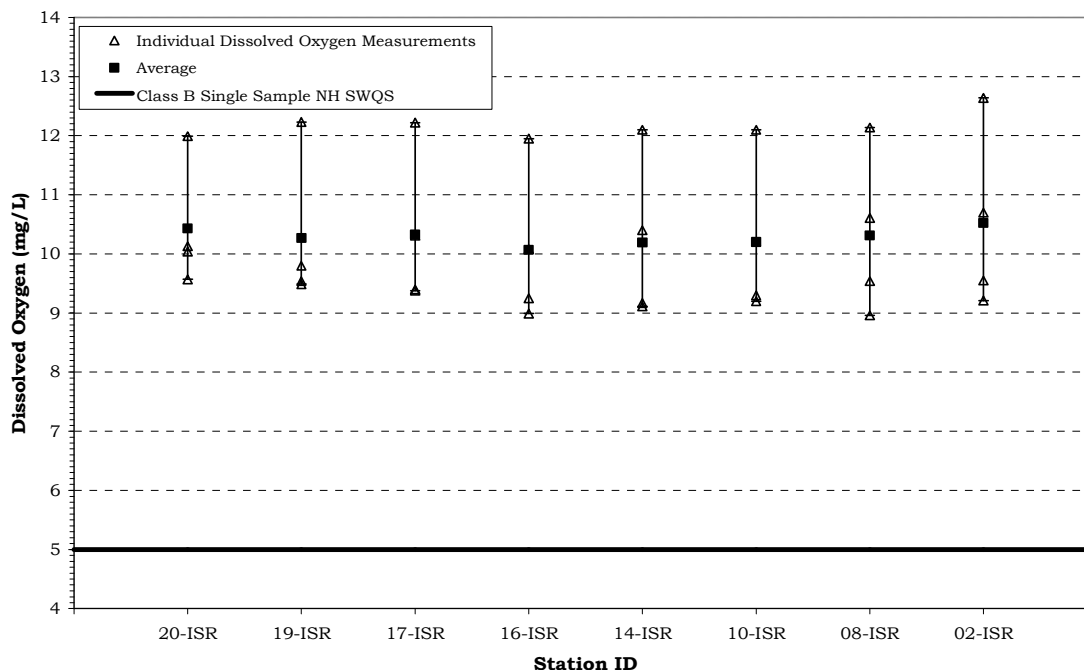
The Class B New Hampshire surface water quality standard for dissolved oxygen includes a minimum concentration of 5.0 mg/L **and** a minimum daily average of 75 % of saturation. In other words, there are criteria for both concentration and saturation that must be met before the river can be assessed as meeting dissolved oxygen standards. Table 4 reports only dissolved oxygen concentration as more detailed analysis is required to determine if instantaneous dissolved oxygen saturation measurements are above or below water quality standards.

Table 4. Dissolved Oxygen Concentration Data Summary - Israel River, 2005

Station ID	Samples Collected	Data Range (mg/l)	Acceptable Samples Not Meeting NH Class B Standards	Number of Usable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment
20-ISR	4	9.57 - 11.99	0	4
19-ISR	4	9.49 - 12.23	0	4
17-ISR	4	9.38 - 12.22	0	4
16-ISR	4	8.99 - 11.95	0	4
14-ISR	4	9.11 - 12.10	0	4
10-ISR	4	9.20 - 12.10	0	4
08-ISR	4	8.96 - 12.14	0	4
02-ISR	4	9.21 - 12.64	0	4
Total Number of Useable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment				32

Dissolved oxygen concentration levels were above state standards on all occasions and at all stations (Figure 2). The average concentration of dissolved oxygen was consistently above the Class B standard at all stations ranging from 10.1 mg/L to 10.5 mg/L. Levels of dissolved oxygen sustained above the standards are considered adequate for the support of aquatic life and other desirable water quality conditions.

**Figure 2. Dissolved Oxygen Statistics for the Israel River, New Hampshire,
July 25 - October 28, 2005, NHDES VRAP**



Recommendations

- ❖ Continue sampling at all stations in order to develop a long-term data set to better understand trends as time goes on.
- ❖ If possible, take measurements between 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., which is when dissolved oxygen is usually the lowest, and between 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. when dissolved oxygen is usually the highest. In general, dissolved oxygen levels are lowest in the early morning when there is low photosynthetic activity and a peak in respiration from organisms throughout the water column. This is the time of least oxygen production and greatest carbon dioxide emission. Peak dissolved oxygen levels occur when photosynthetic activity is at its peak. The greater the amount of photosynthetic activity the greater the production of oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis.
- ❖ Next year incorporate the use of in-situ dataloggers to automatically record dissolved oxygen saturation levels during a period of several days. This will allow for the calculation of the daily average for dissolved oxygen per cent saturation. Dataloggers can be put in the water for a period of several days and collect data at specific time intervals (e.g. every 15 minutes). The use of these instruments is dependent upon availability, and requires coordination with NHDES.

4.2. pH

Between two and four measurements were taken in the field for pH at eight stations on the mainstem of the Israel River from Randolph to Lancaster [Table 5]. Of the 22 measurements taken, all met quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) requirements and are usable for New Hampshire's 2006 surface water quality report to the Environmental Protection Agency. The Class B New Hampshire surface water quality standard is 6.5 - 8.0, unless naturally occurring.

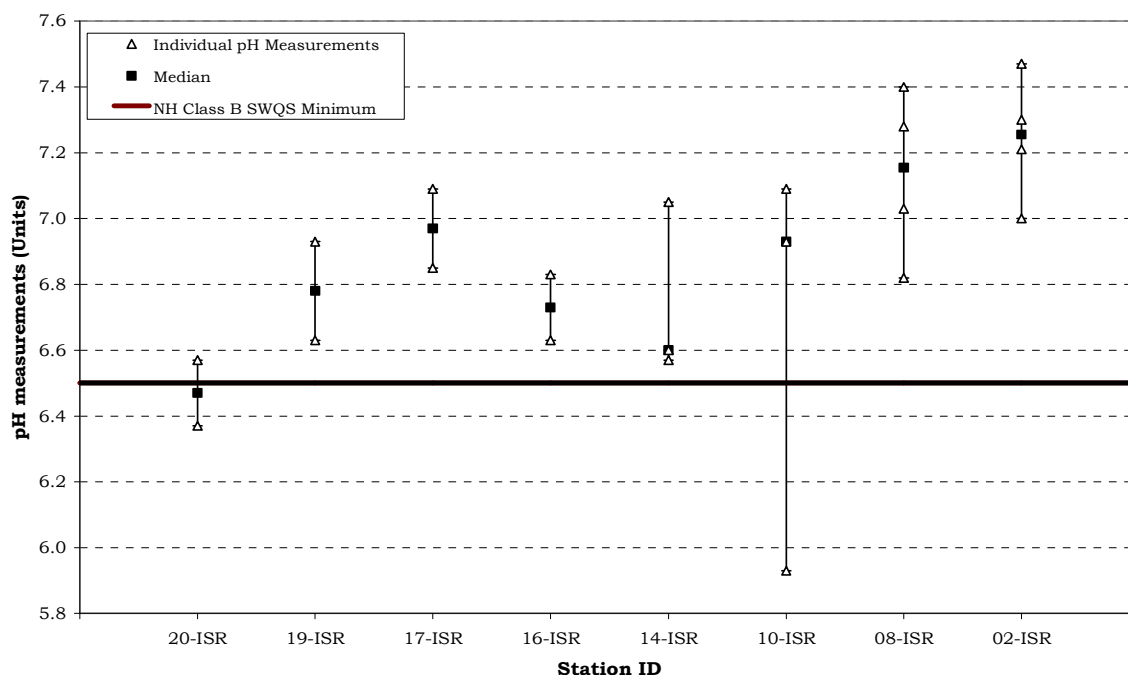
Table 5. pH Data Summary - Israel River, 2005

Station ID	Samples Collected	Data Range (standard units)	Acceptable Samples Not Meeting NH Class B Standards	Number of Usable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment
20-ISR	2	6.37 - 6.57	1	2
19-ISR	2	6.63 - 6.93	0	2
17-ISR	2	6.85 - 7.09	0	2
16-ISR	2	6.63 - 6.83	0	2
14-ISR	3	6.57 - 7.05	0	3
10-ISR	3	5.93 - 7.09	1	3
08-ISR	4	6.82 - 7.40	0	4
02-ISR	4	7.00 - 7.47	0	4
Total Number of Useable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment				22

A majority of the pH measurements on the Israel River were within the range of the New Hampshire surface water quality standard (Figure 3). Two of the stations (20-ISR and 10-ISR) had one occasion where the pH was below the standard.

Lower pH measurements are likely the result of natural conditions such as the soils, geology, or the presence of wetlands in the area. Rain and snow falling in New Hampshire is relatively acidic, which can also affect pH levels; after the spring melt or significant rain events, surface waters will generally have a lower pH.

**Figure 3. pH Statistics for the Israel River, New Hampshire,
July 25 - October 28, 2005, NHDES VRAP**



Recommendations

- ❖ Continue sampling at all stations in order to develop a long-term data set to better understand trends as time goes on.
- ❖ Consider sampling for pH in some of the tributaries and wetland areas that are influencing the pH of stations with measurements below state standards. Site conditions are considered along with pH measurements because of the narrative portion of the pH standard. RSA 485-A:8 states that pH of Class B waters *shall be between 6.5 and 8.0, except when due to natural causes*. Wetlands can lower the pH of a river naturally by releasing tannic and humic acids from decaying plant material. If the sampling location is influenced by wetlands or other natural conditions, then the low pH measurements are not considered a violation of water quality standards. It is important to note that the New Hampshire water quality standard for pH is fairly conservative, thus pH levels slightly below the standard are not necessarily harmful to aquatic life. In this case, additional information about factors influencing pH levels is needed.

4.3. Turbidity

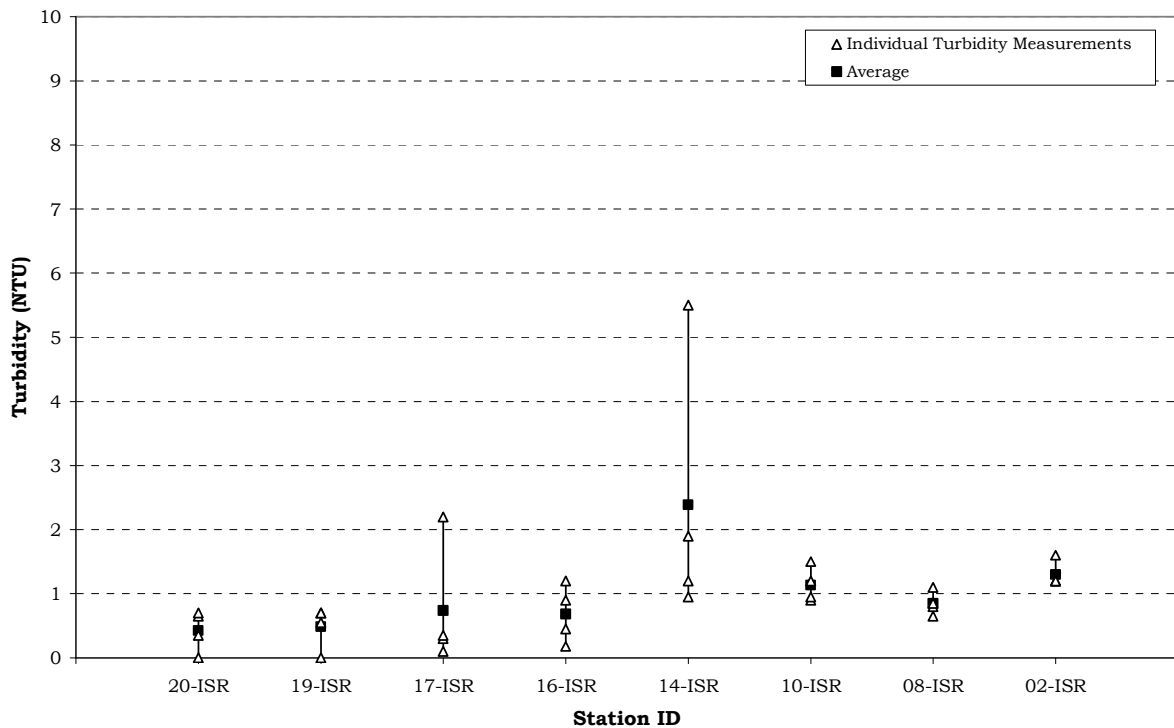
Four measurements were taken in the field for turbidity at eight stations on the mainstem of the Israel River from Randolph to Lancaster [Table 6]. Of the 32 measurements taken, all met quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) requirements and are usable for New Hampshire's 2006 surface water quality report to the Environmental Protection Agency. The Class B New Hampshire surface water quality standard for turbidity is less than 10 NTU above background.

Table 6. Turbidity Data Summary - Israel River, 2005

Station ID	Samples Collected	Data Range (NTU)	Acceptable Samples Not Meeting NH Class B Standards	Number of Usable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment
20-ISR	4	0.0 - 0.7	0	4
19-ISR	4	0.0 - 0.7	0	4
17-ISR	4	0.1 - 2.2	0	4
16-ISR	4	0.2 - 1.2	0	4
14-ISR	4	1.0 - 5.5	0	4
10-ISR	4	0.9 - 1.5	0	4
08-ISR	4	0.7 - 1.1	0	4
02-ISR	4	1.2 - 1.6	0	4
Total Number of Useable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment				32

Turbidity levels were low on all occasions and at all stations with the average ranging from 0.4 NTU to 2.4 NTU (Figure 4). Although clean waters are associated with low turbidity there is a high degree of natural variability involved. Precipitation often contributes to increased turbidity by flushing sediment, organic matter and other materials from the surrounding landscape into surface waters. However, human activities such as removal of vegetation near surface waters and disruption of nearby soils can lead to dramatic increases in turbidity levels. In general it is typical to see a rise in turbidity in more developed areas due to increased runoff.

**Figure 4. Turbidity Statistics for the Israel River, New Hampshire,
July 25 - October 28, 2005, NHDES VRAP**



Recommendations

- ❖ Continue sampling at all stations in order to develop a long-term data set to better understand trends as time goes on.
- ❖ Collect samples during wet weather. This will help us to understand how the river responds to runoff and sedimentation.
- ❖ If a higher than normal turbidity measurement occurs, volunteers can investigate further by moving upstream and taking additional measurements. This will facilitate isolating the location of the cause of the elevated turbidity levels. In addition, take good field notes and photographs. If human activity is suspected or verified as the source of elevated turbidity levels volunteers should contact NHDES.

4.4. Specific Conductance

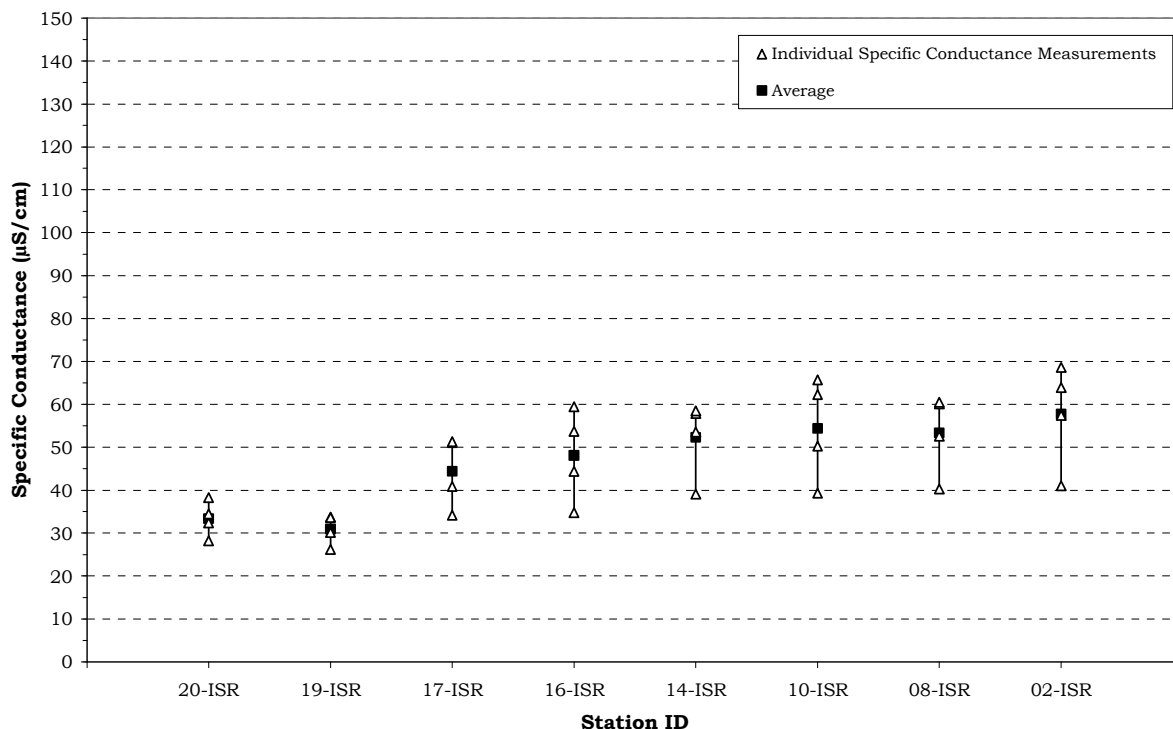
Four measurements were taken in the field for specific conductance at eight stations on the mainstem of the Israel River from Randolph to Lancaster [Table 7]. Of the 32 measurements taken, all met quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) requirements and are usable for New Hampshire's 2006 surface water quality report to the Environmental Protection Agency. New Hampshire surface water quality standards do not contain numeric limits for specific conductance.

Table 7. Specific Conductance Data Summary - Israel River, 2005

Station ID	Samples Collected	Data Range (µS/cm)	Acceptable Samples Not Meeting NH Class B Standards	Number of Usable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment
20-ISR	4	28.2 - 38.3	Not Applicable	4
19-ISR	4	26.2 - 33.7	N/A	4
17-ISR	4	34.2 - 51.3	N/A	4
16-ISR	4	34.8 - 59.5	N/A	4
14-ISR	4	39.1 - 58.5	N/A	4
10-ISR	4	39.3 - 65.7	N/A	4
08-ISR	4	40.3 - 60.5	N/A	4
02-ISR	4	41.0 - 68.6	N/A	4
Total Number of Useable Samples for 2006 NH Surface Water Quality Assessment				32

Specific conductance levels were relatively low along the entire reach of the river (Figure 5). Higher specific conductance levels can be indicative of pollution from sources such as urban/agricultural runoff, road salt, failed septic systems, or groundwater pollution. Thus, the low specific conductance levels in the Israel River generally indicate low pollutant levels.

**Figure 5. Specific Conductance Statistics for the Israel River, New Hampshire,
July 25 - October 28, 2005, NHDES VRAP**



Recommendations

- ❖ Continue sampling at all stations in order to develop a long-term data set to better understand trends as time goes on.
- ❖ Consider collecting chloride samples at the same time specific conductance is measured. During the late winter/early spring snowmelt, higher conductivity levels are often seen due to elevated concentrations of chloride in the runoff. Conductivity levels are very closely correlated to chloride levels. Simultaneously measuring chloride and conductivity will allow for a better understanding of their relationship.

APPENDIX A

2005 Israel River Watershed Water Quality Data

APPENDIX B

Interpreting VRAP Water Quality Parameters

APPENDIX C

Glossary of River Ecology Terms